

Chapter 3: A Parent's Responsibility

Before You Apply

The decision to place your child on the ESA program should not be taken lightly; by signing them up, you're taking them out of traditional public school, charter school or online public school. Signing a contract to assume the responsibility to oversee the education of even your own child will be a very time consuming and sometimes stressful process. While most families find the overall experience to be very rewarding and report academic gains in their children, some see signing a contract with ADE as restrictive since the law only allows for certain types of expenditures.

Additionally, parents will have many added responsibilities that may range from long term financial planning to negotiating fees and tuition with tutors, therapy providers and private schools; purchasing curriculum, testing and required supplemental materials. Because of the varying educational options the program allows, not every parent will experience the same level of involvement. Successful parents must be:

☒ **Organized** – A parent's organization is critical to the success of a child receiving an ESA. A school district is no longer responsible to send required documents to ADE to maintain records, the parent is. Additionally, parents must pay private schools and vendors consistently or risk delays in funding.

☒ **Timely**- If required reports are not submitted, funds for your child's education will be withheld and the parent risks removal from the program. Being prepared and submitting timely reports will create a seamless process.

☒ **Well Informed & Researched**- "Empowerment" is a key phrase in the program that is often overlooked. Parents, no one else, have the responsibility to research and oversee school placement for their children.

☒ **Patient**- In an ESA the parent is also the lynchpin for communication and problem solving, not the public school system. At times parents must deal with a variety of different requirements from ADE, vendors, other government institutions and private schools all with varying deadlines.

☑ **A Savvy Consumer-** The purchasing power is yours! The Department does not provide a list of private schools, vendors, or any placement assistance and the parent is beholden to any contract they sign with a private school. Do your research before purchasing a product or enrolling your child into a private school!

Do You Agree?

You may have noticed a common thread; you, the parent, are replacing all of the school system's responsibilities. Sounds like a lot but, what *exactly* are you agreeing to?

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- First and foremost you agree to **Provide an education** to replace the public school;
 - **Not enroll your child in a school district or charter school** while under an ESA contract;
 - **Not receive any assistance** from the public school system;
 - **Not accept School Tuition Organization (STO) scholarships** while under an ESA contract.
 - **Use the ESA funds for services found only on the approved list** of educational expenses.
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Is that all; simple, right? It is if you do a small amount of preparation. **Create a plan** before applying and you will be successful—we can help (See Chapter 3.1)!

ESA Advertisements

The program, as stated in previous chapters, is expanding rapidly. Private industry is beginning to meet the demand by opening additional school sites and advertising in print, radio and TV spots.

ADE does not advertise through consumable public media. **Many private advertisements provide incomplete, misleading and inaccurate information.** Unfortunately, this leads to confusion, ineligible students, uninformed parents and wasted efforts.

The Department does provide information through seminars, an [e-mail newsletter](#), department brochures, [Facebook](#) and its website, www.azed.gov/esa.

It is incumbent upon applicant parents to ensure they are being provided with the most up-to-date information by contacting The Department before applying.

Private School Regulation

The state of Arizona boasts a very healthy private school system of which ESA awardees are free to participate. However, ADE does NOT regulate, oversee, control or make recommendations for private institutions (A.R.S. § 15-161).

Parents are responsible for privately entered contracts, stipulations, rules and by-laws agreed upon by the private entity in exchange for enrollment. ADE cannot void a private contract, give legal advice or arbitrate payment schedules.

It is essential that the empowered parent researches all aspects of placement before signing any contract or committing to a long term financial obligation.

ADE does provide guidance through its seminar series for new parents looking for best practices and fraud prevention.

Private School Involvement

The majority of students receiving an ESA attend private schools. The agreement entered into with ADE is with each individual parent, NOT the private school your child is attending. ADE will NOT disclose any information to a private school and requires all official correspondence to come from the parents. Many private institutions, quite rightly, want to assist as much as possible with the transition to their schools, but should not and cannot take over the process. The contractual and legal responsibility is with the parent, not the private institutions that serve them.

Quick Recap

- The parent is ultimately the responsible party, even if you receive assistance from a friend or private school in submitting or filling out paperwork.
- Research, research, research, where you would like to send your child to school **and have a plan before applying**. The Department does not oversee private schools and can offer only limited assistance concerning placement (See Chapter 3.1).
- Being on the program is not for everyone, see what the approved areas of ESA spending are before you apply, read a copy of the contract and review the policies in the back of this handbook (See Chapter 3.1).

- Beware of false advertising! The more the program grows the more the word spreads...and it isn't always accurate information. Contact ADE if you have questions or want to attend a seminar.

ESA Policies Related to this Section

1.5 Pursuant to A.R.S. § 15-161, ESA Staff is prohibited from assisting ESA parents with placing their child in a private educational setting or; making suggestions regarding the selection of curriculum, private tutors or therapy providers.

1.6 ADE will not accept ESA applications, quarterly reports, contracts or renewals that are not filled out and signed by the parent/guardian even if a third party is authorized by the parent to do so on their behalf.

1.7 ADE will not disclose private student information to private schools if requested, nor provide summative lists or records. The parent must provide any and all information to ADE and their chosen school simultaneously to maintain eligibility.

1.8 Parents are responsible for maintaining eligibility throughout the school year for their child by submitting timely and accurate information to The Department. If funding is withheld due to investigation of fraud, late reports, late contracts or other violation of policy the parent is held liable for any third party agreement entered into with private organizations.